



UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 1999

On the second day of the 20th Session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC), the Committee of the Whole (COW) and the Plenary met in parallel sessions throughout the day and into the evening. The COW continued consideration of the programme, the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters. The Plenary addressed policy issues and the report of the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. A Working Group on budget related issues met in afternoon and evening sessions.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW continued consideration of subprogrammes:

Environmental Assessment and Early Warning: POLAND, NORWAY and BELGIUM, among others, reiterated the importance of the Mercure satellite communication system, and inquired about: maintenance costs, savings from the project and in-kind contributions. NIGERIA requested UNEP to facilitate developing countries' use of the system.

Policy Development, Law and Implementation: Shafqat Kakakhel, UNEP Deputy Executive Director, said the subprogramme integrates policy, interagency affairs, law, economics and resource mobilization, and strengthens UNEP's analysis, development, coordination and funding of environmental policy. On stable, adequate and predictable funding for UNEP (UNEP/GC.20/23), CUBA suggested funds from foundations and NGOs. NORWAY called for focused fundraising and a broadened donor base.

Regarding the Global Programme of Action (GPA) for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities (UNEP/GC.20/32), CUBA, ICELAND, KENYA and the US supported an international workshop to address sewage pollution of coastal zones. NIGERIA said developing countries' capacity to protect marine environments and implement policy must be enhanced. Regarding GPA implementation, the US called for technical exchange centers, an improved GPA steering committee and partnerships with NGOs and the private sector. Many speakers commended UNEP's work on biosafety (UNEP/GC.20/33), with EGYPT, ZIMBABWE, BURUNDI and ETHIOPIA stressing capacity building in developing countries. NIGERIA called for efforts to enhance benefits and limit risks.

On freshwater (UNEP/GC.20/21), INDONESIA called for: technical and financial assistance for construction of water resources in developing countries; traditional low-cost water collection and use options; and a stronger UNEP role in integrated freshwater management. The EU noted the importance of the "polluter pays" principle, and encouraged UNEP to develop regional and subregional cooperation for sustainable water management. EGYPT, on behalf of the African Region, emphasized the importance of freshwater access, and called for transfer and dissemination of new technologies. TURKEY said water conflict issues should be dealt with between countries concerned. CANADA supported strengthening of the Global Environmental Monitoring System water programme. KENYA underscored inter-agency cooperation and BURKINA FASO drew attention to groundwater issues.

Technology, Industry and Economics: Kakakhel noted the subprogramme's goal to reorient production and consumption patterns towards cleaner and safer technologies, and products and services that conserve water and energy, prevent pollution and reduce risks. Regarding the functioning of UNEP's specialized offices (UNEP/GC.20/29), JAPAN emphasized the role of the Environment Fund in enhancing International Environment Technology Center activities. On chemicals management, SWITZERLAND, NEW ZEALAND, the EU and others supported UNEP's activities, and lauded the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Club as an innovative way to obtain funds. ICELAND suggested an umbrella mechanism for all chemical agreements. The US, AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND noted possible synergies among chemicals conventions. TANZANIA, supported by CHINA, noted developing country needs including financial and technical support, data collection, public awareness and POPs alternatives. EGYPT, on behalf of the African Group, called for, *inter alia*: inventory compilation assistance; development of national action plans; training and awareness building; and destruction of existing stockpiles. THAILAND emphasized the importance of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. Jim Willis, UNEP Chemicals, recalled GC decision 19/13C calling for immediate action on POPs, and highlighted work on PCBs, alternatives to pesticides, awareness raising and stockpile elimination.

Regarding economics, trade and financial services (UNEP/GC.20/43), NIGERIA called for assistance in enabling developing countries to assess environmental impacts of trade liberalization policies. The US called for economic instruments and incentives to promote sustainable development. CANADA emphasized a mutually supportive role for trade and the environment. The EU called upon UNEP to increase transparency in discussions on trade and environment and to enhance work with the WTO. The Secretariat highlighted work with UNCTAD and WTO, and noted insurance and financial sector contributions to the Finance and Environment Initiative.

Regional Cooperation and Representation: Kakakhel said the main task of the subprogramme is to advance the regional environmental agenda and enhance regional environmental delivery. EGYPT, on behalf of the African Group, called for the regional office to: coordinate; provide technical, legal and policy advice; promote environmentally sound technologies; formulate GEF projects; and provide environmental assessment and monitoring. SENEGAL, BURKINA FASO, the EU, CHINA, VIETNAM, INDONESIA, KENYA, the CZECH REPUBLIC, MEXICO and NIGERIA supported strengthening regional offices. CUBA called for an integrated approach to policy in and among regional offices. BENIN, BURKINA FASO and NIGERIA supported a separate African regional office as agreed to in GC decision 16/1, and BENIN appealed to host the regional office. CHINA and KENYA called for sufficient funding to undertake activities. SENEGAL and BURKINA FASO supported increased programming for Africa. BURKINA FASO and AUSTRALIA highlighted the success of the Latin American and Caribbean office and supported its use as a model. AUSTRALIA and KENYA supported a coordinating office in Nairobi to promote regional coordination. The CZECH REPUBLIC stressed synergies among UNEP and other regional



bodies. The Secretariat noted it was in the process of recruiting staff for regional offices, working with donor countries and seeking closer cooperation with other regional bodies.

Environmental Conventions: Jorge Illueca, Division of Environmental Conventions, introduced: the role of UNEP in promoting convention collaboration (UNEP/GC.20/16); and program support by UNEP to environmental conventions (UNEP/GC.20/17). TUNISIA, with the US and SENEGAL, expressed concern that the Regional Seas Programme did not appear in UNEP's operational chart. AUSTRALIA, with the US, JAPAN, the EU, CANADA and INDONESIA, urged a stronger focus on the International Coral Reef Initiative. MEXICO, with AUSTRALIA, CUBA, the US, ARGENTINA and NIGERIA, emphasized environmental convention coordination, though JAPAN urged that programmes be identified by conferences of parties to these conventions. AUSTRALIA suggested that formal arrangements with convention secretariats were a low priority. The US suggested that a high-level meeting concerning the East Central Pacific was premature. ZAMBIA called for assistance to help developing countries achieve convention objectives. SENEGAL called for scientific and technical studies to determine coordination among conventions

Communications and Public Information: Tore Brevik, UNEP, underscored the subprogramme's objectives to, *inter alia*: enhance the status of UNEP, present UNEP as a dynamic organization, enhance UNEP's status in donor countries and the media; and build support for UNEP in donor countries. CUBA emphasized the importance of environmental education and training. AUSTRALIA suggested that UNEP focus on timely information rather than public affairs activities. SENEGAL stressed training and public awareness programmes. BURUNDI opposed overemphasis on ultramodern communication.

Working Group on Budget Related Issues: The COW established a working group on budget-related issues with the mandate of discussing all budget related documents and submitting draft decisions on relevant issues to the COW by 11:00 am Wednesday, February 3. The working group, chaired by Svein Aage Mehli (Norway), debated the budget for the 2000-2001 biennial and designated a small drafting group, chaired by Australia, to prepare a draft decision. The group adopted draft decisions prepared by the Committee of Permanent Representatives on issues of: management trust funds and counterpart contributions and the cost of administering them. Participants also exchanged views over the issue of stable, adequate and predictable funding for UNEP.

PLENARY

President Mikló announced the establishment of a negotiating group and the Plenary continued discussions on policy issues. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION highlighted UNEP's important role in: environmental law; cooperation with existing convention secretariats; environmental information and early warning systems; environmental emergencies; and being an "ideas man" in the GEF. NEW ZEALAND and COLOMBIA opposed an international right-to-know convention. NEW ZEALAND encouraged using GEO-2 as a template for GEO-3. He opposed the establishment of an emergency stand-by team; the need for a high-level meeting to launch INFOTERRA; and a role for UNEP in setting GEF priorities. SWITZERLAND encouraged a stronger UNEP role in the GEF. INDIA stressed practical multilateral decisions, and improving efficiency, while considering geographical distribution, gender equity and developing countries' needs. PALESTINE said the Executive Director's report on Palestine failed to address Israeli practices against the Palestinian environment and requested a more exhaustive report to address these problems. BRAZIL supported demand-driven initiatives, and opposed NGO participation in negotiating and drafting bodies. GLOBAL LEGISLATORS ORGANIZATION FOR A BALANCED ENVIRONMENT noted its liaison with UNEP to monitor the progress of environmental conventions. Dr. Töpfer supported GEO's broadening of activities. In contrast to the Interagency Environmental Coordinating Group, he supported a more flexible, issue oriented system, and he also noted work with NGOs and IGOs to integrate ecosystem conservation knowledge.

Dr. Töpfer introduced the UNGA's resolutions, highlighting in particular those endorsing UNEP's work and concerning trade and sustainable development. INDONESIA supported: interagency linkages in environmental conventions; early warning systems; and the Environmental Management Group (EMG) and streamlining of UNON. Dr. Töpfer introduced the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlement's report, whose recommendations include, *inter alia*: better interagency coordination, intergovernmental development and integration of NGO knowledge; increased information and assessment requirements; and streamlining and development of UNON. He said the Secretary-General welcomed the GC's views.

UNEP's coordination of environmental conventions was encouraged by NEW ZEALAND, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, POLAND, AUSTRALIA, ARGENTINA, on behalf of GRULAC and HUNGARY. CANADA opposed an umbrella convention or a fusion of secretariats. NORWAY, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THAILAND, POLAND, NIGERIA, CANADA supported the EMG. Conversely, UNESCO, on behalf of the FAO, UNDP, IAEA, IMO and the WMO, urged UNEP to avoid duplicating coordination mechanisms. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, with CHINA, US, ALGERIA and CANADA, endorsed the annual ministerial meeting. HUNGARY noted a proliferation of ministerial meetings. CHINA, with NIGERIA, ARGENTINA, on behalf of GRULAC and the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, supported a stronger role for UNEP and Habitat in Nairobi, but urged that they operate under different executive directors. The SLOVAK REPUBLIC preferred one coordinator.

THAILAND, with NIGERIA and the Task Force, supported a greater role for Major Groups. The US suggested that this was not a priority. The HUMAN ECOLOGY COUNCIL urged a voice for the aged. NORWAY with CANADA, called for elaborating NGO participation modalities. NEW ZEALAND, with ALGERIA and REPUBLIC OF KOREA, endorsed the universalization of the GC membership. JAPAN questioned whether expanding GC members' authority was appropriate for UNEP's efficiency. INDIA noted that the UNGA had not formally asked the GC to respond to their agenda on environmental reforms. Dr Töpfer responded by acknowledging that a final decision for restructuring UNEP had to be taken by the UNGA.

On enhanced coordination between environmental conventions, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Michel Zammit Cutajar distinguished between linkages and support, noted the GEF's important role in linking programmes, emphasized linkages at the national level, and stressed UNEP's technical support to specific conventions, particularly with respect to climate change.

IN THE CORRIDORS

There are concerns that the Regional Seas Programme appears to have dropped off UNEP's functional chart and some delegates are working in the corridors to lobby for its reinstatement.

The proposal for an Environment Management Group appears to have touched on inter-agency sensitivities, with some UN agencies clearly agitated by this possible 'turf' grab. Some delegates are suggesting that the proposal is poorly conceived and will not pass through the UNGA without a substantial rethink. Nevertheless, many delegations expressed strong support for the concept.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

COW: The COW will convene at 9:00 am in Conference Room 1 to continue consideration of programme, the Environment Fund and administrative and other budgetary matters. The Working Group on budget related issues will resume in Conference Room 3 at 9:00 am.

PLENARY: The Plenary will meet at 9:00 am in Conference Room 2 to discuss preparations for CSD-7.

SIDE EVENTS: A panel discussion on The Impact on the Environment of Deforestation will be held from 4:30-6:30 pm in Conference Room 4. A workshop on GEF and the Role of UNEP will take place in the fountain area at 12:00 noon.